

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
FROM: Joseph Frey, Exoneree
DATE: December 16, 2015
RE: Senate Bill 322 & Assembly Bill 460, Fair Compensation for Exonerated Persons

Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety,

Thank you for having this public hearing on such crucial legislation. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to hear our stories. But most of all, I hope I can thank you in advance for supporting Senate Bill 322 and Assembly Bill 460, which will make the re-entry into society that much easier for the wrongly convicted.

There is nothing in this world more valuable to me than my liberty. No compensation or experience will truly make up for the time lost in prison. On February 4th, 1994, I was sentenced to 102 years in prison for a rape that I did not commit. On July 12, 2013, that wrongful conviction was finally, and officially, vacated after DNA testing proved my innocence.

The years I spent in prison taught me many things, but especially to cherish the freedom I have. Upon my exit from prison in 2013, I had limited resources and few connections to help ease the transition back into society. Because I left prison with virtually nothing, I decided to come to Madison to be closer to my attorney with the Wisconsin Innocence Project and community resources. Because I had no money to pay rent and no help from the state, I started my life outside of bars in a homeless shelter. Like many other exonerees, I left prison with serious health issues, but did not have access to health care to afford the medications I desperately needed. Despite these setbacks, I worked to make connections, take classes to learn new skills, and find employment opportunities.

It's not easy to start over many years after you went into prison. Those who are guilty of crimes receive valuable re-entry services to help with reintegration. Those who are actually innocent are left receive nothing. I had a very small social safety net, no re-entry services, and I felt distrusted by so many as a result of my prison term. Imagine today that each of you was wrongly sent to prison for many years. When you re-enter society, the people you knew are different or gone, the places you knew are gone. You have no recent job experience or marketable skills, and the State is not going to assist you in reintegration. Would \$25,000 be enough to make up for those years? Would it be enough to rebuild your shattered life?

None of us is here today to ask for a handout. We just want to be fairly compensated for what has been taken from us. **I ask that you listen to these stories and support Senate Bill 322 and Assembly Bill 460. If not for me, then for any others who DNA evidence and modern science prove innocent in the future.**

Thank you again for your time.